

MAY 23, 2001

**SCHAKOWSKY ORGANIZES CONGRESSIONAL LETTER CALLING FOR AN END TO
RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AGAINST HINDUS BY TALIBAN GOVERNMENT IN
AFGHANISTAN**

URGES PRESIDENT BUSH TO INTERVENE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today organized a letter signed by more than 100 of her colleagues, including Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt (D-MO), calling on President Bush to intervene on behalf of Afghanistan's Hindu minority. Afghanistan's Taliban government is planning to force Hindu residents and other religious minorities to wear labels on their clothes to differentiate them from Muslim citizens.

"The action of the Taliban toward Afghanistan's Hindu minority is disturbingly reminiscent of Nazi Germany's treatment of the Jews. The United States has a responsibility as the world leader to speak up now and to demand an immediate end to this policy, before it's too late," said Schakowsky.

The Letter to President Bush is below.

May 23, 2001

*The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500*

Dear President Bush:

We are writing to you today because we are extremely concerned after hearing news reports which indicate that the Taliban leadership in Afghanistan plans to force Afghan Hindus to wear labels on their clothing to differentiate them from Muslims. We urge you to immediately take steps that will convince the Taliban to withdraw this proposal.

History has shown over and over that segregation of this kind can lead to genocide. This action alone is enough to raise that specter. Afghanistan is also the source of disturbing reports of persecution of religious minorities and women in particular, making this recent news all the more troubling.

News reports also indicated that the policy was justified by Taliban officials as a way to protect the Hindu population in that country. We believe this action will be

counter-productive to that goal. As the leader of the free world, our nation has a solemn obligation to lead in opposition to such dangerous plans. We urge you to immediately fulfill that obligation.

We appreciate your consideration of our request, and look forward to your response.